

Scope of Practice
Commonwealth University
Student Counseling Center
Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, Mansfield

The following Scope of Practice Statement informs students and the Commonwealth University community about the general parameters of services provided for students at the Counseling Center at Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield.

The Counseling Center provides services including psychological, personal, developmental, emotional, and academic/career counseling. Services may involve initial evaluation; treatment recommendations; individual or group counseling; psychoeducation and outreach; triage in urgent situations; and other modalities as needed and appropriate. Referrals may be offered for psychiatric services and mental health services not provided by the Counseling Center. Consultation to faculty, staff, administration, and parents may be provided regarding student needs and wellbeing. Personal health information of students shall be strictly confidential unless there is an authorized release of information or in case of situations falling under parameters established by law (e.g., imminent danger to self or others).

The Counseling Center's full range of services are available free of cost to *any student who is currently enrolled* in the semester in which services are being sought. Services are available in-person and via telehealth, with telehealth services available only to students residing in the state of Pennsylvania. The Counseling Center is not a 24-hour full time mental health service. We follow the academic semesters and are closed during periods when the university is closed, such as weekends, holidays, and scheduled semester breaks.

The Counseling Center is staffed by professional counselors who are faculty members; they are either licensed or licensure-eligible. The Executive Director of Counseling Services is a licensed professional who provides clinical supervision and direction to counseling staff, oversight of mental health services at the university, consultation/liaison with other campus offices and student services, and supervision and training of practicum students and/or interns, among other duties. Professional counselors have a master's or PhD in a counseling or clinical field. All counselors adhere to professional and ethical guidelines of the state and their professional associations.

Counselors use a short-term outpatient counseling model (typically 4-8 sessions). Students are usually seen weekly at first and then transitioned to biweekly appointments, based on counseling needs and counselor availability. In line with the short-term counseling model, the Counseling Center limits the number of sessions to 20 over a student's degree. Exceptions to session limits are reviewed by the clinical team. The Counseling Center Director is responsible for monitoring and enforcing session limits.

The Counseling Center does not provide 24 hour on-call crisis intervention services. Experienced community-based 24/7 intervention teams in the counties in which the Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield campuses are located are mandated to serve both the community at large and the campus population. Crises arising during the Counseling Center's regular business hours will be

assessed by counselors and forwarded to county-level crisis services if a) hospitalization seems warranted, or b) counselors cannot provide the level of care necessary in the situation, given campus resources. After hours and weekend crisis intervention services shall also be provided by county-level crisis services, as will crisis intervention services during times when classes are not in session (e.g., Spring Break). Students are made aware of this policy on the Counseling Center website and as part of the informed consent process. Students are also informed about these and additional services, such as national crisis intervention hotlines and websites, via the Counseling Services D2L page, Counseling Services voicemail messages and e-mail signatures, the Student Handbook, campus publications, and twice-yearly e-mails to all students, faculty, administration, and staff.

All services are provided within the Counseling Center during designated business hours or in designated counseling areas where a counselor is “semi-embedded” in a department or area, including counseling sessions using Zoom and telephone contacts. Services provided outside of the Counseling Center (i.e., from a counselor’s home office) must be approved by the Director of the Counseling Center.

Referral to off-campus mental health or psychiatric services may occur if such an action is warranted given a) limits of Counseling Center resources, b) level and nature of student need, and/or c) student response to or non-compliance with counseling.

Issues Commonly Addressed in Counseling Centers

Students come to counseling for many reasons, but some of the most common include but are not limited to the following:

- Personal issues such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, grief, body image
- Relationship issues regarding friends, family, partners, roommates
- Developmental concerns like adjustment to college, life transitions, identity
- Other issues such as responding to trauma or assault; dealing with test anxiety or stress management; or needing a referral for ongoing mental health services outside the Counseling Center.

Specific Services Provided by the Counseling Center include:

- Intake evaluation and treatment recommendations
- Short-term individual counseling
- Group counseling / Group skills-based sessions
- Psychoeducational workshops and interventions
- Urgent walk-in triage during business hours (After hours emergency services are provided by county-based crisis services).
- Consultation to university employees regarding their role in supporting students identified in need of counseling or support services.
- Same day/Walk-in appointments may be offered on an as-available basis. These meetings occur at the student’s request and are typically shorter duration appointments.

The Counseling Center strives to be responsive to a wide range of mental health needs of our students, but there must be limitations in our services. Services we do NOT provide at the Counseling Center include:

- Mandated services (evaluation, triage, or counseling required of a student by a third party): students must seek services, freely consent to services, and freely consent to any release of information to third parties.
- Emergency or crisis services outside of typical Counseling Center hours.
- Telehealth for students currently residing outside Pennsylvania.
- Testing/evaluation for disability claims, custody claims, or other legal proceedings.
- Psychological testing for learning disabilities, ADHD, autism, and/or other neuropsychological conditions
- Pre-surgery mental health evaluation.
- Evaluations or documentation for Emotional Support Animals
- Intensive, long-term, outpatient counseling services
- Regular sessions that are more than once a week or longer than an hour.
- Consistent weekly sessions may not always be available to students, especially at times of high demand. Decisions about session frequency will be made based on clinical need.
- Couples/Marital Counseling
- Family Counseling – given all individuals served must be students, family counseling is not provided. Consultations with family members are limited to emergency or defined needs and with students' permission
- Counseling services for students who are no longer enrolled / not enrolled in the semester in which the student is seeking services
- Intensive ongoing case management services

When Referral is the Best Option

In addition to those stated above, referral to community resources is best for:

- Students with an existing, current, ongoing treatment relationship with another mental health provider which they wish to continue.
- Students seeking services who have engaged in inappropriate, harassing, or threatening behaviors.
- Mandated or required treatment for the purposes of:
 - Substance abuse treatment, alcohol education, anger management, parenting education, domestic violence, etc.
 - Counseling required by employers or academic departments
- Comprehensive psychological evaluations regarding determination of risk (i.e., for suicide, self-harm, homicide, stalking, or other forms of potential serious risk to self or other).
- Students only interested in psychiatric consultation or medication management.
- Students who show lack of motivation or engagement in the treatment process, such as:
 - Refusal to provide sufficient information needed for clinical assessment purposes
 - Inconsistent attendance (i.e., persistent no-shows, cancellations, or rescheduled appointments).
 - Unwillingness to attempt treatment recommendations.
 - Usage of multiple urgent sessions / appointments with related lack of follow-through with appropriate recommendations.

- Any other situation in which it is determined that services being requested / required are outside the scope of services provided by the Counseling Center, or when services being requested by student are clinically determined to be harmful/detrimental to the student.